Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vvachapter1.com

MAY 2016

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING
May 26, 2016

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place at the start. Directors present included President Andy Megrath; Dave Mathis, vice president; John McLaughlin, treasurer; Jack Crowther, secretary; and Bill Whitney and Dick Doyle, directors. There being no business for the board to conduct, the regular meeting began.

The minutes of the April meeting were approved unanimously.

Treasurer John McLaughlin reported $61,505 in the chapter's bank accounts. His report was approved unanimously.

Andy Megrath reported that Gary Besaw and his wife are no longer in the business of supporting and maintaining web sites. They had handled the construction of the Chapter 1 site and assisted with it for a number of years. The plan has been to work with students at Castleton University to handle the conversion of the web page to whatever it will be in the future, with Andy continuing to handle the routine updates, such as posting of the newsletters. The Besaws have renewed the chapter's domain names, vvachapter1.com and vvachapter1.org, for which they will be reimbursed. The alliance with Castleton hasn't yet occurred.

Andy raised the issue of supporting the Boys & Girls Club of Rutland County, a suggestion from member David Gilman. After brief discussion, Jack Crowther proposed a donation of $1,000. Seconded by Dick Doyle. Approved unanimously.

Andy presented a request from a Blue Star Mother, Valerie Pallotta, whom he met at the Salute to Veterans event the previous Saturday in Barre. The core of the group are mothers who now have, or have had, children honorably serving in branches of the United States military. Associate members include dads, relatives, friends, and other supporters of our troops.

Valerie and Gregory Pallotta's son, Josh, committed suicide following active service in Afghanistan in 2009 and 2010. Now the Blue Star Mothers, with whom Valerie serves as first vice president, is working to acquire a house to convert into a wellness recreation center for veterans. It will be called Josh's House in honor of her son and will provide recreation and wellness services for victims of post traumatic stress disorder, with the goal of helping them return to full lives.

The Pallottas live in Colchester. The Blue Star Mothers of America is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization formed for the purpose of supporting America's military, veterans, and their families, and to foster patriotism. The Vermont chapter of Blue Star Mothers was chartered on February 4, 2011. The Blue Star Mothers do not support any political organization and do not support or endorse any candidate or affiliation.

The consensus of our Chapter 1 meeting was to acquire more information about the project before committing to a specific donation amount. Andy will get the information. Most of the details above were not available at our meeting and were obtained online afterwards.

Andy provided a report on the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council, of which he is a member. He said the recently concluded Legislature had not passed any veterans benefits. Andy was critical of the committee's current excessively large membership of 32, with decision-making resting in the hands of an executive committee. "I've already been told to shut by mouth a couple times," Andy said. Andy said he has also been been removed as the VVA State Council rep to the Governor's Veterans Advisory Council.

“No offense, but what are you on it for,” asked Dick Doyle.

The obviously frustrated Andy said he was staying on the Governor’s Veterans Advisory Council to be a thorn in their side. By that he he obviously meant representing veterans outside the inner circle of those seeking to take over the council.

“Just maintain your integrity, that’s all you can do,” Doyle advised.

Andy then raised the issue of a donation to the Dodge House, Rutland’s transition house for homeless veterans. It is a cause Chapter 1 has regularly supported in the past. We agreed that Chapter 1 should have a specific request from Christine Morgan, the executive director, in order to make a new donation.

In old business, Andy again raised the issue of a granite memorial addition to the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Main Street Park. The chapter had received a quote from Rutland Marble & Granite Products for a granite marker that was envisioned as something more permanent that the four plaques that currently tell the story of the Vietnam War, the founding of Chapter 1, the establishment of the memorial, the list those killed in action from Rutland County, and the roll of those who served in the war from Rutland County.

Andy had received an inquiry from John Socinski of Rutland Marble & Granite about his quote. Jack Crowther repeated his points from the last meeting, essentially saying he felt the memorial was a unified and complete project as it stood. He preferred that money be set aside for a kind of “perpetual care” of the memorial for when Chapter 1 ceases to exist. That is likely to be in 10 to 15 years, as most of us acknowledge. That day could come much sooner, as Andy Megrath has suggested this may be his last term as president.

Following was a discussion about who might receive and administer any funds the chapter might set aside. Ultimately Jack Crowther agreed to talk to City Treasurer Wendy Wilton concerning setting up a city fund with strings attached to insure that the money was used for the purpose intended.

In the final item of business, Andy played for us on his smartphone a video prepared by a junior at Milton High School on the Vietnam War. We were impressed with the work of Meghan Edwards, who combined interviews with vets with pictures from the war and facts about the often unfriendly reception vets received on returning home. She also related problems vets experienced that were related to their service. Andy was one of those interviewed and planned on relaying congratulations to her for a job well done.

The winner of the $50 attendance lottery was Andy Megrath..

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING THURSDAY, AUG. 25, AT 6 P.M.
AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.

VVA Chapter 1
15 Wales St.
Rutland, VT 05701
Address Correction Requested

Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vvachapter1.com

AUGUST 2016

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING
August 25, 2016

Note to Members: This newsletter is longer than normal due to the volume of business conducted at the meeting. Attention is called to two items in the minutes below: (1) Discussion of setting up "perpetual care" for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial when Chapter 1 is no longer viable, and (2) A challenge to the *membership* to donate in support of a Dodge House request for replacement of furniture. I've begun discussion of each of these two topics with bold type to make them easier to locate. — JC

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place at the start. Directors present included President Andy Megrath; Dave Mathis, vice president; John McLaughlin, treasurer; Jack Crowther, secretary; and Bill Whitney, George Henry and Dick Doyle, directors. There being no business for the board to conduct, the regular meeting began.

Nine members attended the regular meeting, including Norm Savigny of West Rutland and Bill Ellwood of Shrewsbury and Florida.

(1) The meeting began with presentations from Rutland City Treasurer Wendy Wilton and William Notte, president of the Rutland City Board of Aldermen. Chapter 1 Secretary Jack Crowther had invited them to attend to discuss whether the chapter could establish a trust fund with the city for "perpetual care" of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Main Street Park. The idea arose from the fact that as the Vietnam vets of Chapter 1 retire from active participation, the chapter and its active oversight of the memorial will end.

The chapter has discussed setting aside some of its funds for ongoing care of the memorial, which involves the maintenance of plantings, paving, a large sculpture, commemorative plaques, and flags.

Treasurer Wilton began by noting that the city Board of Aldermen would need to approve establishment of the kind of fund that is envisioned. Once that happens, her office would assume oversight of what would be called a fiduciary fund, meaning "money that the city holds in trust for others." In that case the city doesn't own the money but is "custodian" of the money. Existing funds of this type include the city workers pension fund and the Mike Garofano scholarship fund.

Wilton said that the status of fiduciary funds is reported monthly to the aldermen, is protected from bank failure, and is subject to annual auditing by outside auditors.

A question and discussion concerned who would supervise the fund once established. In the case of the Garofano Scholarship Fund, a group was set up to award the scholarships.

President Notte, said of the memorial, "Certainly this is a wonderful addition to our city parks." He noted that the aldermen would need to create the fund and accept the money from Chapter 1, but he thought the procedure of adopting guidelines for the money would be an "easy action" for the aldermen.

Notte envisioned a meeting, perhaps of the aldermanic Recreation Committee, which oversees city parks, at which Chapter 1 would spell out the uses of the money donated by the chapter. Those guidelines would then be adopted and guide expenditure of the money in the future.

President Andy Megrath noted some of the maintenance requirements include replacement of the placards at the memorial, replacement of flags, and sealing of the pavement and sculpture.

Treasurer Wilton raised the question of maintaining the memorial once the trust fund was exhausted. Board President Notte replied that he envisioned language for the fund that provided for city responsibility for the memorial once funds for its upkeep ran out.

Andy Megrath suggested as an example that the chapter might make an initial deposit of $10,000 to the fund, then add money later. When the chapter closes its doors and ceases to exist, it might transfer remaining monies into the fund. Wilton confirmed those kinds of actions were fine. Notte added that anyone who wished could contribute to the fund once established, as for example through memorial donations.

On a somewhat related matter, Jack Crowther noted that at some point he'd propose a meeting with the Rutland Historical Society to decide which materials — such as the Chapter 1 charter and early records — might be kept permanently when other materials were disposed of.

President Notte said he would report to the aldermen at the next meeting on our discussion at the Chapter 1 meeting and have the matter referred to a committee, probably recreation or finance. He said that when Chapter 1 had come to a decision on establishing the trust fund and had drawn up criteria for its use, it could then meet with the committee to "make certain that before the board officially says, 'Let's go forward with this,' we have full agreement on what you're hoping to do.

"So I think that's the smart way to move forward," he said. In answer to a question, he said the guidelines for the fund could be modified with another vote of the aldermen.

Wilton assured Andy Megrath, who expressed a concern of a member, that there was no way the funds donated by Chapter 1 would be mingled with the city's general fund for operations. "Our auditor would not be happy . . . and neither would I (be happy)," she replied.

Later in the meeting, those attending agreed that Jack Crowther would draw up guidelines for setting up the "perpetual care" fund for the memorial. ***However, it's important that any members with views on the matter — either in support of the idea or against it — should weigh in and give their opinions, either by writing to the chapter at VVA Chapter 1, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701, or emailing President Andy Megrath at vthogman@comcast.net.***

In connection with the discussion about the end of Chapter 1, there was some discussion of whether, as current leadership retires and the chapter becomes inactive, a reduced form of operation might be possible under the VVA Constitution. The issue can be pursued as necessary with the constitutional experts at VVA national.

Moving on to other business, the meeting heard from Tom Allen, commander of the VFW Post 648, which owns the building in which Chapter 1 has its office. Chapter 1 formerly paid a nominal rent of $200, but several years ago the VFW post allowed us to use our space for free.

Allen said the post was hoping that Chapter 1 might help the post maintain the building. He noted that income of the post has declined a lot and its membership has declined. Some help with the heating costs or building fund would be welcome. "As time goes, this building is killing us," Allen said. "The electricity here is over a thousand dollars a month." Allen thought thought that if Chapter 1 contributed $200 a month it would be "fantastic" and "would help us tremendously."

Later in the meeting, Dave Mathis made a motion to pay the VFW a voluntary rent of $200 per month in two yearly payments, beginning Sept. 1. Seconded by John McLaughlin. The motion passed with one no vote. (Secretary's note: The above "no" vote and others listed below may have been cast for humorous effect, but the secretary is not absolutely certain.)

The minutes of the May meeting were approved unanimously.

Treasurer John McLaughlin reported $62,751 in the chapter's bank accounts. His report was approved unanimously.

Andy Megrath called attention to a Veterans Expo on Saturday, Oct. 1, at the Waterbury American Legion. The Expo will provide information to veterans and their dependents on how to access services and benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Sponsored by the Northfield Savings Bank and Century 21 Jack Associates, the event will also provide assistance with purchasing or refinancing your home with a VA loan through your local bank. A home inspector and attorney will be present to answer questions about the process and how to proceed after a contract is signed. A listing of past exhibitors suggests that a range of services and organizations will be on hand to help with various issues.

The VVA State Council meeting will be Sept. 17 in St. Albans. George Henry and Dave Mathis indicated they'd be willing to attend.

Andy read a thank-you letter from the Council on Aging community development coordinator in Morrisville. The chapter donated $250 to help in removal of tires. The effort was part of a cleanup of property belonging to a veteran who had recently suffered a stroke.

The chapter currently has 142 regular members and five associate members.

(2) Under new business, Andy read a request from the Dodge House, Rutland's transitional facility for homeless veterans, for assistance in replacing some outmoded furniture at the home. A television, end tables, a curtain, lamps, a rocker-recliner, a love seat, a night stand, a chests of drawers and bedding are among the items, the total bill for which would be $4,542.

In leading off discussion of the request, Dick Doyle suggested it might be appropriate to extend the request to the chapter membership. After some discussion, Dick moved to have the chapter donate half, or $2,250 to the Dodge House for the furniture and issue a challenge to the membership to contribute the rest. Seconded by Dave Mathis. The motion passed with one no vote.

Bill Ellwood kicked off the member portion of the drive with a generous donation. Anyone willing to assist in this effort may send a check to Chapter 1 Treasurer, John McLaughlin, 96 Glory Lane, Leicester, VT 05733. If you would like to have your name mentioned as a donor, just add a note saying something like, "OK to list my name as a donor to the Dodge Furniture Fund.

George Henry, a director of Chapter 1, noted that as a "snowbird" wintering in Florida, he is interested in participating in meetings during the winter, if possible, through a phone or other electronic connection.

Andy Megrath noted that the administrators of the Vermont Veterans Fund, of whom he is one, were to meet the next day to decide on distribution of $93,000-plus. The money will be distributed to organizations that apply for it. The money, raised through a checkoff on the Vermont State income tax return, is a sizable increase from last year's $53,000. Among the applicants is the Dodge House, which is looking to replace its heating system.

On another matter, Jack Crowther reported on research he had done on replacing the solar flag light at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Main Street Park. After several years of trying to get the flags lit at night in accordance with flag protocol, the chapter had acquired and installed a light. Unfortunately, the light provided minimal illumination. Then, shortly after its installation, the light fell off its bracket. After some discussion, Dave Mathis pointed out that current protocol did not require lighting the light at night. A quick Google search by Dick Doyle indicated that is evidently the case, although the wording is a bit vague.

The American flag "should be displayed only between sunrise and sunset, although the Flag Code permits night time display 'when a patriotic effect is desired' and the flag is illuminated," according to Wikipedia. However, what constitutes proper illumination does not seem to be clearly defined. It does not seem to require a spotlight. One online source, Flags International, suggests that so long as the flag is not "enveloped in darkness" and is "recognizable as such," the code is being met.

In light of the problems in lighting the flag, the possibility of vandalism to a more powerful solar light mounted at ground level, and the apparent wiggle room in the flag protocol, the issue was tabled.

The winner of the $50 attendance lottery was Norm Sevigny.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING TUESDAY, OCT. 18, AT 6 P.M.
AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.

VVA Chapter 1
15 Wales St.
Rutland, VT 05701
Address Correction Requested

Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

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OCTOBER 2016

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING
October 18, 2016

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place at the start. Directors present included President Andy Megrath; Dave Mathis, vice president; John McLaughlin, treasurer; and Jack Crowther, secretary. There being no business for the board to conduct, the regular meeting began.

Six members attended the regular meeting, including Bill Ellwood of Shrewsbury and Florida and Cliff Adams of Bristol.

The meeting began with a presentation and request from Richard Gallo, a Vermont veterans outreach specialist with the Vermont National Guard. His role is to work with combat vets and the Guard. A 22-year Army veteran raised in Rutland, he described his role as working with individuals and agencies to assist veterans. He has a current case load of 18 cases. He works with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the local Dodge House for homeless vets, the Open Door Mission, and Project Vision, as examples.

Gallo's request involved a Purple Heart veteran, wounded in Somalia, who needed financial help to repair his car, to the tune of $948, of which $350 had already been raised. The veteran in question has a spouse and young child.

Later in the meeting, Jack Crowther made a motion to donate $500 to assist the veteran in question. Seconded by Dave Mathis. Passed unanimously. As is customary with this type of assistance, the money will be paid to the provider of the service, in this case auto repair, rather than to the individual.

Gallo assured us that he had a further promise of assistance to raise the full amount.

The minutes of the August meeting were approved unanimously as printed in the newsletter.

Treasurer John McLaughlin reported $62,543 in the chapter's bank accounts. His report was approved unanimously. The report included an accounting of what we're calling the Dodge House Fund, which came about this way:

Rutland's Dodge House for homeless veterans recently requested assistance for some new furniture, estimated to cost a total of $4,542. At the August meeting, we voted to donate half that amount, $2,250, and invite members to donate additional funds. Bill Ellwood, a life member of Chapter 1, began with a donation of $100. We stated that persons could donate anonymously or publicly. Since Bill's donation, we have received an additional $445, as follows: $200 from an anonymous donor; $100 from Carl Baldwin; $100 from Fred Wallis; $20 from Martha Jillson; and $25 from Gregory and Brenda Washburn in memory of Laura Dix.

Additional donations may be made to Dodge House Fund, VVA Chapter 1, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701. Let us know if you wish to remain anonymous or be identified. If no preference is stated, we will give your name.

The treasurer's report was approved unanimously.

President Andy Megrath reported the chapter has 141 members and 5 associate members.

Andy read a letter from the Morristown Community Development Coordinator, Tricia Follert, thanking Chapter 1 for its donation of $250 to help remove several hundred tires from the property of a veteran who had recently suffered a stroke.

The Dodge House also sent us a thank-you for our donation cited above.

We received a note from John R. Fraser of Chelsea, who is trying to get in touch with someone who knew Jody Fish, a Rutland soldier who was killed in the city of Hue in 1968 during the Tet Offensive. At the time of his death, Jody had just two weeks to go before his tour was to end. Jody Fish is one of 18 area soldiers killed in action whose names are engraved on the Vietnam Memorial. John Fraser served with Jody Fish in Hue. John Fraser's telephone number, for anyone who would like to contact him, is 802-685-4357.

The meeting then turned to the issue taken up in the last couple of meetings: the eventual end of Chapter 1 and our interest in establishing some sort of "perpetual care" for the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. At our last meeting in August, City Treasurer Wendy Wilton and Rutland City Board of Aldermen President William Notte outlined the procedures for setting up a fiduciary trust in the city to care for the memorial once the organization no longer exists. The fund would be cared for by the city treasurer's office but kept separate from city government operating funds. To set up the fund the aldermen would have to approve its establishment, including guidelines for its use.

On Sept. 6, President Notte brought up the issue with the Board of Aldermen, who referred it to the Recreation Committee. Our understanding is that the Recreation Committee will wait for communication from Chapter 1 regarding our wishes for the fund.

Secretary Jack Crowther agreed at our August meeting to draft guidelines for the fund for care of the memorial. Here is the draft he submitted at the October meeting:

DRAFT

Rutland County Vietnam Veterans
War Memorial Trust Fund

I. Introduction

A. The Rutland County Vietnam Veterans War Memorial Trust Fund will be established by Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America on DAY/MONTH/YEAR.

B. The purpose of Trust Fund is to insure that the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans War Memorial, located on Rutland City property (Main Street Park) on Route 7 South (South Main Street) is cared for and maintained in a manner that honors the men and women who served in the Vietnam war, and all veterans.

C. The Trust Fund is established with an initial contribution of $_____ from Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America, whose address is 15 Wales St., Rutland, Vt. 05701. It is expected that this amount will be added to in the future with contributions from Chapter 1 and donations from Chapter 1 members and the public.

D. The Trust Fund will be overseen as a fiduciary trust by the City Treasurer in accordance with the usual practices for such a trust and the guidelines set forth below.

II. Management of the Trust

A. The Trust Fund will be managed by a Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Joint Committee appointed by the Rutland City Board of Aldermen and Chapter 1 as set forth below.

B. The president, vice president and secretary of Chapter 1 will be members of the committee, whose other members are as set forth in C below. If any of the Chapter 1 officers is unable to attend a particular meeting, the president of Chapter 1 may appoint a replacement.

C. Other members of the Joint Committee shall consist of members of the Board of Aldermen's Recreation Committee (?). The chair of the Recreation Committee shall conduct the meetings of the Joint Committee according to the usual manner.

D. If and when Chapter 1 is no longer in existence, the former officers shall continue to serve as they wish. If vacancies occur, the mayor of Rutland shall appoint replacements to insure that at least two members will represent the county's veterans, giving priority to Vietnam veterans. However, he can appoint non-Vietnam-era veterans at his discretion. Since the memorial honors veterans from across Rutland County, the veteran members do not need to be from Rutland City.

III. Expenditures

A. Expenditures from the trust shall be made for upkeep and maintenance of the memorial, including such things as landscaping, flag replacement, replacement of the informational plaques, care of the marble sculpture, sealing of the paved area, and the like.

B. The Joint Committee shall, on its own authority, propose expenditures from the Trust Fund based on the condition and needs of the memorial.

C. The Recreation and Parks Department of Rutland City shall also make recommendations for expenditures from the Trust Fund based on maintenance and upkeep needs of the memorial. The Joint Committee shall have the authority to approve the proposed expenditures, or to deny them, or to negotiate modifications in what is proposed.

IV. Thank You

Chapter 1, Vietnam Veterans of America, expresses its gratitude to the City of Rutland for its interest in, and commitment to, preserving the legacy of Chapter 1 and the veterans of Rutland County who served in the Vietnam War.

The above draft came up for discussion, beginning with a letter from Dave Potter of Clarendon, a former member of the chapter and state representative. While generally approving the idea of the fund, he was concerned that the plaques might not be be properly maintained once Chapter 1 dropped out of the maintenance picture. The plaques are a combination of metal and vinyl and subject to deterioration. The memorial's Honor Roll plaque has been updated several times with additional names, and the other plaques have been replaced once because of deterioration.

The draft was discussed. Jack Crowther proposed that he add the treasurer's position to those of the other three officers who will serve on the committee overseeing the trust fund. There was no objection. Also suggested was a gender-neutral reference to the mayor of Rutland, substituting "he or she" for "he" and "his or her" for "his."

Andy Moschetto of Delray Beach Fla., chaired the dedication ceremony of the memorial in 2000 and headed the committee that planned and built the memorial. In communication with Chapter 1 President Andy Megrath, he voiced his approval of the memorial fund, citing the city's initial gift of land in the park for the memorial.

An initial donation of $10,000 was agreed to. On a motion by Jack Crowther, seconded by Dave Mathis, the meeting instructed Jack to send the revised draft statement to the city treasurer and Recreation Committee. The motion was approved unanimously.

Andy reported receiving documents for two additions to the Vietnam memorial Honor Roll, Francis Timbers and Mark Treanor. They will be added to the Honor Roll with some other names when the Honor Roll is next revised.

Dave Mathis reported on the Sept. 17 meeting of the VVA State Council. He reported: 1) that the national VVA is talking about what to do as members drop out and chapters dissolve. (How are they going to handle it?); 2) that national is also considering how to handle claims of children and grandchildren who may have been affected by the Agent Orange exposure of their parents and grandparents; 3) the national organization is also asking if associate members could keep the VVA going as the regular members leave the scene?

These questions will be addressed at a national meeting that VVA President Perry Melvin will attend in Washington. The VVA Veteran indicated the national Board of Directors and State Council presidents were to meet Oct. 20-22 in Washington, D.C.

The next State Council meeting will be Saturday, Dec. 17 in Rutland at 11 a.m. at the Chapter 1 room at 15 Wales St.

There was brief discussion of the VVA service officer program, which is seeking donations to support the program. Jack Crowther asked if Chapter 1 should donate. Andy Megrath and Dave Mathis recommended against it.

Andy said he was not referring any vets to the VVA service officer program, "Because for one reason they haven't been very supportive of some of our members." He said he's had to refer some people to the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs in Montpelier as an alternative to using the VVA service officer program.

Andy and Dave's complaints were directed specifically at A.J. Paige, coordinator of the VVA service officers for Vermont and New Hampshire. Difficulty in getting in touch with Paige and his failure to return phone calls were the gist of the complaints.

Andy said he has raised the issue with John Miner of Bennington, VVA Region 1 Director, and Perry Melvin, VVA state president. "He's got too much on his plate," he said of Paige.

Dave Mathis related a personal experience in being unable to get in touch with Paige, even trying to go through VVA State President Melvin. Dave wound up going through a service officer in Florida, where he lives in the winter.

Andy Megrath, who serves as web master for our website, said he has talked to someone about revamping the Chapter 1 website. The problem is that the software for the present website is no longer supported by the software company. In addition, our former web consultants are no longer doing that work. Andy will pursue the matter further. A redo of the site may take 20-30 hours of work, he said. Andy had hoped to get the work done by a student at Castleton University in return for the student getting credit, but the effort has come to naught.

A related issue is that Andy has come across a Chapter 1 Facebook page but is unable to determine who owns it. Bill Ellwood said if someone could direct him to the page, he might be able to determine its authorship.

We heard from member Cliff Adams of Bristol, who is working on a Vietnam veterans project for the Vermont Folklife Center in Middlebury. Cliff is the Veterans Project outreach volunteer with the center and has been talking to them about an exhibit related to Vietnam veterans. He has already provided them with some pictures and audio tapes but he is seeking further contributions and would like material related to Chapter 1 of VVA. The precise nature of the exhibit is yet to be determined and will depend on materials collected. This could include photos, videos, mementos and the like. The folklife center has a studio that can be used for recording personal stories.

We provided Cliff with two historical articles on Chapter 1 in The Veteran magazine, the VVA publication, along with some other materials. "I'm thinking a good part of it should be an oral history," Cliff said. Cliff hopes the focus of the project to be the history of Chapter 1, although personal recollections and other elements can be part of it as well. Cliff's contact information is: email, cliffadm@sover.net; and phone, 802-453-7112. Cliff said he hoped to pull the project together in the next six months.

In other new business, Jack Crowther mentioned some deterioration of the sign at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Before this newsletter went to press, Andy Megrath and Dave Mathis had already replaced a deteriorating cleat on the back of the sign with some new pressure-treated wood. Andy will try to match the paint on the back of the sign.

With sadness, we report the death of Gold Star Mother Olive Pettis, 88, of West Haven in June of this year. Mrs. Pettis was the mother of Spec. 4 Steven G. Pettis, who was killed in action in Vietnam in 1969.

The winner of the $50 attendance lottery was Cliff Adams.

The VA has greatly increased its clinical trials, opening up more opportunities for veterans to participate. Participation is STRICTLY VOLUNTARY, and the research will be explained to volunteers "in great detail." To participate, you must be eligible to receive care at the VA Medical Center in White River Junction. Patients are currently being enrolled in trials for the following conditions: cardiovascular disease, ischemic heart disease, PTSD, castrate-resistant prostate cancer, MDS, Type-2 diabetes with kidney disease, congestive heart failure, bladder cancer, depression, and colon cancer. In addition, recruitment for the **Million Veteran Program** is under way at the VA in White River. It is a program studying the role that genes play in veterans' health. **THE VA MEDICAL CENTER IN WHITE RIVER JUNCTION SHOULD BE ABLE TO DIRECT YOU TO THE PROPER PLACE TO PURSUE VOLUNTEERING FOR A TRIAL. YOUR PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN CAN PROBABLY BE OF HELP AS WELL.**]

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING MONDAY, DEC. 5, AT 6 P.M.
AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.

VVA Chapter 1
15 Wales St.
Rutland, VT 05701

Address Service Requested

Vietnam Veterans Of America

Chapter One

www.vvachapter1.com

DECEMBER 2016

MINUTES OF CHAPTER MEETING
December 5, 2016

A nominal meeting of the Board of Directors took place at the start. Directors present included President Andy Megrath and Jack Crowther, secretary.

Only two members, Andy and Jack, attended the regular meeting, not a quorum. Therefore no official business could be conducted.

Andy reported that the concrete walk at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial has been cleaned and sealed by Carpenter and Costin at a cost of $350.

Membership stands at 141 regular members and five associate members.

The Treasurer's Report showed a balance of $60,645, through Oct. 31.

We received a thank-you note from the veteran the chapter assisted in getting his car fixed. The chapter donated $500, to be paid to the repair garage.

The VVA State Council will meet Dec. 17 at 11 a.m. at the Chapter 1 office in Rutland. Any member is welcome to attend and see how the statewide organization operates.

We received a thank-you note from the Dodge House for homeless veterans for our contribution toward the refurnishing of the home. Chapter 1 donated $2,250. In addition, chapter members have donated an additional $600. Anyone who would like to assist in the project may write a check to VVA Chapter 1 and indicate it is for the Dodge House Fund. Send it to VVA Chapter 1, 15 Wales St., Rutland, VT 05701. Let us know if you want to remain anonymous or be identified. If no preference is stated, we will give your name.

At the October meeting, Cliff Adams of Bristol solicited help for a Vietnam veterans project he is working on with the Vermont Folklife Center in Middlebury. This would be some sort of exhibit and include oral history. In particular, he wants to focus on the history of Chapter 1, although personal recollections and other elements can be part of it as well.

Since October, Cliff has written to Andy Megrath to see if someone from Chapter 1 could come to the Folklife Center for a meeting. Being the only ones present at this meeting, Jack and Andy agreed they could go up together. However, any other chapter members interested in taking part in this project can contact Cliff directly at cliffadm@sover.net or 802-453-7112, or Andy at vthogman@comcast.net.

A Chris Perrin is trying to raise money for a friend making a documentary on homeless vets and has asked for assistance. Andy will call to learn more about the project.

On Dec. 2, Andy visited Milton High School as a followup to student Meghan Edwards' notable project on the Vietnam War. While it started out to be a "paper," it wound up as a video, including an interview with Andy. Her impressive effort earned Meghan an A+ grade. She has since received a four-year Presidential Scholarship to Norwich University.

In appreciation of her efforts, Andy presented her with two "challenge coins," a POW-MIA lapel pin and a certificate of appreciation from Chapter 1.

Jack Crowther reported that Rutland Aldermen George Gides has shown interest in having a local scouting troop assist with a maintenance project at the Rutland County Vietnam Veterans Memorial. George is planning to follow up at a future time.

The Chapter 1 secretary's wife, Sue, pointed out an interesting article in Consumer Reports on a scam aimed at veterans receiving pensions. Here's the article from the January 2017 issue.

Veterans' Pension Scam

What it is. Veterans over 65 are offered free seminars by financial advisers or financial-services companies to help them qualify for an enhanced pension with Aid and Attendance, a benefit for low-income vets with disabilities. Seminar sponsors convince vets whose income or assets are above the threshold to restructure their finances so they'll qualify, typically by buying a costly annuity or creating an expensive trust that pays the sponsors a hefty fee.
How to protect yourself. For details about your eligibility for this benefit, go to the **VA's online benefits portal**. For assistance completing and filing pension claims, use someone from the **VA's list of accredited professionals**.

Thanks, Sue, for pointing out the article.

Respectfully submitted,
Jack Crowther, secretary

THE CHAPTER WILL HOLD ITS NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY, FEB. 8, AT 6 P.M.
AT THE CHAPTER OFFICES AT THE VFW, 15 WALES ST., RUTLAND.
A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL PRECEDE THE REGULAR MEETING.